

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II- Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

August 31, 2012

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben:

I want to thank you and the entire staff at Equal Justice America for awarding me a 2012 Summer Fellowship. I am grateful for the opportunity I was given to intern at Cabrini Green Legal Aid ("CGLA") in their criminal records department. I am unable to describe in words how influential and inspiring my summer experience with CGLA truly was.

I developed bonds through my summer at CGLA that I know will carry through past my law school years and far into the future. The people I met were incredible, and I cannot thank them enough for sharing their stories with me.

Being a part of the criminal records department allowed me the opportunity to listen to people talk about their life experiences, the hardships they endured, and their amazing accomplishments. The people I got to know, and meet with, are nothing short of amazing and extremely resilient.

I admire the strength and courage CGLA clients have to take ownership of their lives, and really strive to be the best versions of themselves. One of CGLA's visions is "for our clients to leave us stronger than they came." After having interned at CGLA, I can attest to the realization of that vision not only with CGLA's clients, but also among interns and staff members through all aspects of life at CGLA.

Aside from being grateful for the relationships I formed, I am grateful for the substantive assignments I was given. In addition to meeting frequently with clients, I also spent the majority of my time drafting health care waiver and clemency petitions. It was great feeling as though I was actually making a difference.

Another aspect of my summer that I greatly valued, was the opportunity CGLA gives its interns to meet with practicing attorneys from many different practice areas with varying backgrounds.

Thank you so much for an unforgettable summer.

Sincerely,

Tina Tran

Loyola University Chicago School of Law
Class of 2014





September 5, 2012

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director, Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Equal Justice America Fellow – Tina Tran

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This letter is written to you as an evaluation of Ms. Tina Tran's Equal Justice America Fellowship at Cabrini Green Legal Aid (CGLA). Tina worked under my supervision this summer in the Criminal Records Program. This fellowship took place after she had been volunteering with CGLA during the school year leading up to the summer.

One of the benefits of working with law students in a volunteer capacity prior to an internship is that they walk in on day one with an understanding of the substantive law. We had to spend no time at all teaching Tina about the intricacies of expungement and sealing in Illinois. In her volunteer capacity, and continuing over the summer, she spent one morning a week at our Expungement Help Desk, where she reviewed client's criminal records, advised them on eligibility for different forms of relief and when eligible, prepared pro se petitions for expungement or sealing to be filed with the court. Her skills over the summer in client counseling improved greatly as her confidence improved in the advice she was providing. It takes a certain type of person to be able to deliver legal consultations in an understandable manner to pro se petitioners, as well as deliver difficult news to clients that do not qualify for relief. Tina excelled in this role and it was a pleasure watching her grow.

The summer fellowship allowed her the opportunity to move into other substantive areas of criminal records work beyond expungement and sealing. We counsel over 4,000 people a year at our Help Desk and over 50% of the clients do not qualify for legal relief through expungement and sealing. The clients are either in a waiting period or their offenses are ineligible for relief. To that end, she advised and assisted client in the preparation of other forms of relief from their record, most notably Health Care Waivers and Petitions for Executive Clemency. Both require in-depth client interviewing skills, document collection, analysis of the criminal record and persuasive writing. She wrote several Health Care Waivers for clients and prepared a Petition for Executive Clemency, for which she'll appear before the Prisoner Review Board on that request in October.

Additionally, she interviewed and prepared notes for attorneys to step up in court on behalf of pro se petitioners at the objection call for expungement and sealing. CGLA represents all pro se petitioners before the court, one to two times a week at the objection call and she assisted the attorneys in this capacity. This required the ability to quickly and effectively interview a client and prepare them to appear before the Court. Again, as her confidence grew over the summer, so did her ability to counsel and advise clients under attorney supervision.



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In addition to substantive legal work, Tina demonstrated other skills necessary to work in a legal aid setting. Those included the ability to remain organized with a large number of tasks, deliver for deadlines and keep detailed case files. It was a smooth transition when she left at the end of the summer, which is our goal each year. Finally, she had the empathy required to advocate on behalf of clients in a professional manner, another gift that cannot be taught, but is necessary to work with vulnerable clients seeking relief from past mistakes.

Thank you to your organization for your continued funding of law students seeking to serve at legal aid organizations. Without your support, many would pursue other paying work or work at a legal aid to their financial detriment. We know Tina will remain a volunteer with CGLA and continue to build upon the great work she started over the summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Johnson".

Beth Johnson

Attorney & Program Director